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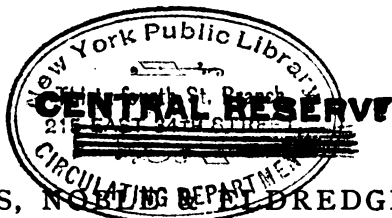
SHORT STUDIES IN COMPOSITION

BY

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PREFACE

THE chapters which make up this book were originally published in the *Chautauquan*, forming part of the required work of the C. L. S. C. course. It was the writer's purpose to present the essential principles of good writing, free from technical terms, and accompanied by exercises which to a large extent make the pupil his own teacher. To persons who wish to improve themselves in the difficult art of writing, and to schools where a brief and untechnical manual is desired, it is hoped that this book may be of service.

B. A. H.

ED. TRIMMER
SEP 16 1942

To
A. E. C.

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SHORT STUDIES IN COMPOSITION

CHAPTER I

DESCRIPTIVE WRITING

FOR the purpose of study, it is convenient to recognize four classes of prose writing — Description, Narration, Exposition, or explanatory writing, and Argument. Taking up Description first, let us see how the masters in literature manage it. Here, slightly abridged, is Thackeray's famous description of Beatrix Esmond :

From one of these doors, a wax candle in her hand, and illuminating her, came Mistress Beatrix — the light falling indeed upon the scarlet riband which she wore, and upon the most brilliant white neck in the world. She was beyond the common height. Her eyes, hair, and eyebrows and eyelashes were dark ; her hair curling with rich undulations and waving over her shoulders, but her complexion was as dazzling white as snow in sunshine, except her cheeks, which were a bright red, and her lips, which were of a still deeper crimson. Her mouth and chin were large and full, her shape was perfect symmetry, and her motion, whether rapid or slow, was always perfect grace : there was no single movement of hers but was beautiful.

There are several points in that description worth noting. First, its fulness of detail. Beatrix's height, her complexion, features, the color and curl of her hair, her figure and carriage are all described. Yet in spite of the many particulars, the reader carries away one chief impression — that of her beauty. This is mentioned in the first sentence, emphasized in the third, and summed up at the end. Noteworthy, also, is the order

**Description
by enumeration.**

in which the details are given. If Beatrix were standing before you, you would note all these details at once. But the writer must put them in one by one: what shall he put first? Thackeray gives first the broad outlines of the picture, then fills in the detail. Read the description again, and note that you first get an image of her figure as a whole, then come the particulars. Description of this kind, which gives many particulars about an object, is called description by enumeration.

But it is not necessary to give many details in order to present a clear image to the reader. Here, for example, is a sketch by Rudyard Kipling:

I was afraid of Miss McKenna. She was six feet high, all yellow freckles and red hair, and was simply clad in white satin shoes, a pink muslin dress, an apple-green stuff sash and black silk gloves, with yellow roses in her hair.

Even briefer is this:



Mr. Silas Riley, accountant, was a long, gawky, rawboned Yorkshireman.

You see him, do you not? Yet Kipling tells nothing about his complexion nor his clothes; these details we can fill in ourselves. And this method, which may be called description by suggestive details, is perhaps more effective than description by enumeration. Here are other examples, which show how very little is required to suggest a picture:

Description
by suggestive
detail.

A little old man, with a face like a frost-bitten apple.

In came Mrs. Fezziwig, one vast substantial smile.

But description may do more than suggest externals. This is the way G. W. Steevens describes Major-General Kitchener:

He stands several inches over six feet, straight as a lance, and looks out imperiously above most men's heads; his motions are deliberate and strong; slender but firmly knit, he seems built for tireless steel-wire endurance rather than for power or agility. Steady, passionless eyes shaded by decisive brows; brick-red, rather full cheeks; a long moustache beneath which you divine an immovable mouth; his face is harsh, and neither appeals for affection nor stirs dislike.

That tells you not only how Kitchener looks, but what manner of man he is. It is description that suggests

character. This kind of description is very effective in fiction, as it enables one to realize the characters better.

Description deals with places as well as persons. In describing a scene, as in describing people, various methods may be used. A good example of description by enumeration is found in Hawthorne's *Blithedale Romance*. It shows how much may be made of unpromising material, for the view described is that seen from the back window of a hotel on a rainy day :

Over against the hotel and its adjacent houses, at the distance of forty or fifty yards, was the rear of a range of buildings, which appeared to be spacious, modern, and calculated for fashionable residences. From the upper story to the first floor they were so much alike that I could only conceive of the inhabitants as cut out on one identical pattern, like little wooden toy-people of German manufacture. One long united roof, with its thousands of slates glittering in the rain, extended over the whole. The interval between was apportioned into grass plots, and here and there an apology for a garden, pertaining severally to these dwellings. There were apple trees, and pear and peach trees, too, the fruit on which looked singularly large, luxuriant, and abundant. In two or three places grapevines clambered upon trellises, and bore clusters already purple. Dreary as was the day, the scene was illuminated by not a few sparrows and other birds, which spread their wings, and flittered and fluttered, and alighted, now here, now there, and busily scratched their food out of the wormy earth. Most of these feathered winged people seemed to have their domicile in a robust and healthy buttonwood tree. There was

a cat, as there invariably is in such places. I watched her creeping along the low flat roofs of the offices, descending a flight of wooden steps, gliding among the grass, and besieging the buttonwood tree, with murderous purpose against its feathered citizens. But, after all, they were birds of city breeding, and doubtless knew how to guard themselves.

Note that in this, as in the description of a person, the general view is given first, mentioning only the most prominent objects. Then, when the ground plan is laid down, the minor details are filled in, sometimes very minutely. Hawthorne notes not only the kind of trees in the yards, but the fact that the fruit was unusually large. This description was probably written with the scene before the writer's eyes; it was Hawthorne's custom to record in his notebooks such minute descriptions, and afterwards use them in his stories.

Color, sound, and motion are the three chief means of making a description vivid. The description last quoted is a good example of movement. Note how many words are used to express the motion of the birds and of the cat. In the sketch of Miss McKenna previously quoted, most of the effect is due to color. And how much may be made of sound is shown in another passage in the *Blithedale Romance*, where Coverdale, in his room in the hotel, seeing nothing, is yet cognizant of all that passes through the sense of hearing:

Color,
sound, and
movement.

Beneath and around me I heard the stir of the hotel ; the loud voices of guests, landlord or barkeeper ; steps echoing on the staircase ; the porter lumbering past my door with baggage, which he thumped down upon the floors of neighboring chambers ; the light feet of chambermaids scudding along the passages. From the street came the tumult of the pavements. A company of the city soldiery, with a full military band, marched in front of the hotel, invisible to me, but stirringly audible, both by its foot-tramp and the clangor of its instruments. Once or twice all the city bells jangled together, announcing a fire, which brought out the engine-men and their machines, like an army with its artillery rushing to battle.

Description of nature is perhaps more difficult than the other kinds. We are all used to seeing people and houses, but it is not every one who has learned to look at nature with the closeness and sympathy required for good description. There was a touch of this in the first description quoted from Hawthorne. A better example is Thoreau's description of the surface of Walden Pond :

Standing on the beach in a calm September afternoon, I have seen whence came the expression the glassy surface of a lake. It is literally as smooth as glass, except where the skater insects by their motions in the sun produce the finest imaginable sparkle in it, or perchance a duck plumes itself, or a swallow skims so low as to touch it. It may be that in the distance a fish describes an arc of three or four feet in the air, and there is one bright flash where it emerges and another

where it strikes the water ; sometimes the whole silvery arc is revealed ; or here and there, perhaps, is a thistle-down floating on its surface, which the fishes dart at and so dimple it again. You can even detect a water-bug ceaselessly progressing over the smooth surface of the lake a quarter of a mile off, for they furrow the waters lightly, making a conspicuous ripple, while the skaters glide over it without rippling it perceptibly. Over this great expanse there is no disturbance but it is at once gently smoothed away and assuaged, as when a vase of water is jarred, the trembling circles seek the shore and all is smooth again.

Note how Thoreau has confined himself in this description. He does not describe the wooded shores of the pond, nor the color of the water, nor the glimpses of the bottom ; elsewhere he speaks of these, but here he confines himself to the surface alone. And the description shows that he has looked at it closely and sympathetically. This is imperative in good nature description. In the writings of Seton-Thompson, of John Burroughs, of Olive Thorne Miller, you find this same close and loving study of the objects described.

It remains to make practical application of the principles of descriptive writing as shown in these examples. To this end the following exercises will be helpful. In writing them, do not expect to produce literature, any more than you would expect to play the piano at the first trial. These studies are the five-finger exercises

that must come first, not literature any more than five-finger exercises are music, but, like them, necessary. It would be very pleasant if one could gain new power and beauty of expression by simply reading a few pages, but unfortunately it is not possible. The important parts of these chapters are the exercises at the end, and the benefit derived will be in direct proportion to the time spent upon these.

EXERCISES

1. Write a detailed description of an acquaintance, after the manner of Thackeray's description of Beatrix Esmond.

2. Write a briefer description of the same person, using the method of suggestive detail.

3. Write a description that suggests character, like the description of General Kitchener. It would be an interesting exercise for a class to have some of these descriptions read aloud, and give the others a chance to guess the person described.

4. Select in an audience some striking face, of a person unknown to you ; study it carefully, and afterward describe it.

5. Describe a group of people, such as a crowd at an auction, or at a fire, or an audience at a concert, or a scene in a crowded lunch room at noon. Here you will

not attempt to describe individuals, but to give the general appearance, and the mood or emotion that dominates the whole. This should be studied on the spot.

6. Write a description of a peanut-seller, an organ-grinder, or some other street character. Study your subject, and find out something to individualize him, so that your description would not fit any other organ-grinder.

7. Describe the view from your window, as Hawthorne did. Do not forget the color and movement in the picture. Try to give the description interest by telling not only what is seen, but what is suggested, as Hawthorne comments upon the people in the houses.

8. Write a description from sound alone, like the one quoted.

9. Write a description of a building ; first, of your home, using the method of suggestive detail.

10. Describe a court-house, church, or other building of some architectural pretensions. If you are not familiar with architectural terms, look up these words in an unabridged dictionary and use them where necessary: Gothic, Corinthian, Ionic, Doric, pediment, buttress, pinnacle.

11. Describe a bit of natural scenery, a brook, or a corner in a park, in the manner of Thoreau. It is best to write this with the scene before you. Do not attempt to cover too much ground ; select a small scene, and do

it thoroughly. Do not omit the color, and discriminate between various shades of the same color, as the green of the foliage and the green of the grass.

12. Read Ruskin's *Fronde Agrestes*, and, if you have the courage, try your hand at describing the sky.

13. Write a description of a picture. It is best to select a portrait or a small group: landscape painting is difficult to describe. If possible, visit an art gallery where you can see paintings, and get the color effects. If not, it is easy to find copies of famous Madonnas, etc.

14. Look over a novel you have read recently and see how the descriptions are done. Do you have a clear image of the people? Are they described by enumeration or by suggestive detail? Do the descriptions suggest character? Is there much description of places? Does the author give the color? motion? sounds? Write a theme on this author's handling of description, based on your study.

CHAPTER II

NARRATION

NARRATION differs from description in that it deals with action. A narrative may recount a morning call or the eruption of a volcano, but in any case something occurs ; matters are not just as they were. The incident or incidents which form the basis of narration we call the plot. In its simplest form, narration consists of plot alone. The following story, from the *Gulistan*, is an example of such simple narrative :

A king was sitting in a boat with a Persian slave. The boy having never before seen the sea, nor felt the inconvenience of a boat, began to cry aloud, and his whole body was in a tremor. Notwithstanding all the attempts that were made to soothe him, he would not be pacified. The king's pleasure was disturbed, and no remedy could be found. A philosopher who was in the boat at last said, If you will command me, I will silence him. The king replied, It will be a great kindness. The philosopher ordered them to throw the boy into the sea, and after several plunges they laid hold of him by the hair and dragged him into the boat again, when he sat down in a corner and was quiet. The king was pleased, and asked how this was brought about. The philosopher replied,

At first the boy had never experienced the danger of drowning, neither did he know the safety of a boat. In like manner, he who has encountered adversity knows the value of prosperity.

This is a narration of the simplest kind. But most narration, in addition to plot, contains description. The scene where the events occur, and the people who take part in them, are described more or less fully. Further, the author usually brings out the characters of the people, so we have a third element, characterization. The following example, taken from F. Marion Crawford's *Ave Roma Immortalis*, combines these three elements, description, plot, and characterization. The scene is the Coliseum at Rome :

**Plot,
description,
and character-
ization.**

Straightway, tier upon tier, 80,000 faces rise, up to the last high rank beneath the awning's shade. High in the front, under the silken canopy, sits the emperor of the world, sodden-faced, ghastly, swine-eyed, robed in purple, all alone, save for his dwarf. . . . And then the wildest, deadliest howl of all on that day; a handful of men and women in white, and one girl in the midst of them; the clang of an iron gate thrown suddenly open; a rushing and leaping of great, lithe bodies of beasts, yellow and black and striped, the sand flying in clouds behind them; a worrying and crushing of flesh and bone, as of huge cats worrying little white mice; sharp cries, then blood, then silence, then a great laughter, and the sodden face of mankind's drunken master grows

almost human for a moment with a very slow smile. The wild beasts are driven out with brands and red-hot irons, step by step, dragging backward nameless mangled things in their jaws ; and the bull-nosed dwarf offers the emperor a cup of rare red wine. It drips from his mouth while he drinks, as the blood from the tiger's fangs.

What were they? he asks.

Christians, explains the dwarf.

How much richer that is than the first example. The descriptions bring the place and the actors vividly before you. The strokes of characterization make you see Nero as he lived.

Plot, description, and characterization, then, form the three elements of narration, and good narration usually combines them all. We are apt to think of narration as if it included merely fiction, but its field is much wider. It deals with events, real as well as imaginary. It may be the events in a man's life, or biography ; it may be the events in a nation's life, or history. Both are narration, and to both the principles of narrative writing apply. The historian, detailing many events, must arrange his account in such a way as to make it clear ; he is dealing with problems of plot. And he must use description ; Parkman shows how effective this element is. Characterization, too, the historian employs—Carlyle with great effect. But the field of narration is yet wider. Take up a daily paper, and whether you read

the general news, the Wall Street column, or the doings of society, you are still reading narration. Probably half of all that appears in magazines is narration. It is worth while, then, to give some attention to the chief principles that govern this form of composition.

A narrative is made up of a number of incidents, or selected details. Life is unrolling its panorama before us all the time. From the myriad incidents we see, we select one or two, present them in their setting, and the **Selection of result is narration.** The first step in **narration.** **material.** tion, then, is selection. What shall be put into the narrative, or rather, since everything is before you, what shall be left out? Have you ever noticed how few people can tell a story well? Whether repeating an anecdote or relating something they have seen, they repeat themselves, they go back, they put in unimportant details—they fairly spoil a good story. This is because they do not obey the laws of plot. The first and most important of these laws may be stated as follows: Decide upon what you are going to tell, get your chief point in mind, and then relentlessly cut out everything that does not bear upon it. Edgar A. Poe, a master of narrative, has stated the principle in this way: the writer must have his end clearly in view from the beginning, and every word, every touch of description, should contribute towards that end. Our first step, then, in

preparing a narration of any kind, whether an account of a barn-raising or a novel that is to outsell *David Harum*, is to decide upon the effect to be produced, and then put in only such details as contribute towards that. Let us take for the purpose of illustration the following narrative by an inexperienced writer :

OUR PICNIC

One day last summer the boys and girls of the senior class in our high school decided to hold a picnic at Wayland's Grove. The day set was the Saturday after the Fourth, but that day it rained, so the picnic was postponed to the next Saturday. The morning dawned bright and fair. We were all up early and packed our baskets full of good things, and by 7 o'clock were ready at the starting place. We had a ride of four miles to the grove, and arrived there about 8 o'clock. Our party soon divided into little groups, some at the swings, some hunting for flowers, while others went to the creek. At the upper part of the grounds the creek is deep and narrow ; below, it widens into a pond, as there is a dam there. Some of the boys had taken a boat and were paddling about. Two of the girls who were hunting for botany specimens wished to cross the creek. There was a foot-log at the narrow part, and they started to cross on that. When halfway over, the girl ahead saw a snake on the log. She screamed and started back, striking against her companion, and in a moment both girls were in the water. The boat was near, the boys quickly reached the place and pulled the girls out, with no worse injury than a wetting. Then they went up to the log to kill the snake. In a few moments a shout of laughter was heard.

The boys held up the snake for all to see, and we saw — a whiplash. There were no other mishaps that day, and the rest of our picnic was greatly enjoyed. We returned home by moonlight, singing and blowing horns all the way, and all agreed that the picnic had been a success.

That is a fair example of how an inexperienced person tells a story. It is correct, as far as composition goes, but it is very far from being good narration. Why did the writer choose that subject ; what is the chief interest ? Obviously, the accident. If the purpose, then, is to tell about the accident, what does it matter whether the picnickers started at 7 o'clock or at 8 ? Why should we be told that the picnic had been originally set for an earlier date ? And the well-filled baskets — why mention them here ? It is evident that the writer had not his chief point clearly in mind. Instead of writing about the accident he was writing about the picnic. Now suppose that story is rewritten from the standpoint of the important event. It is better to give it a new title.

ON THE FOOT-LOG

It happened last summer at our class picnic at Wayland's Grove. There is a creek there, narrow and deep at the upper part, and widening into a pond below. Some of the boys were paddling a boat on the pond, while the girls were hunting flowers. There was a foot-log across the creek at the narrow part, and two of the girls started to walk across. When halfway over, the girl ahead saw a snake on the log.

She screamed and started back, striking against her companion, and in a moment both girls were in the water. The boat was near. The boys quickly reached the spot and pulled the girls out, with no worse injury than a wetting. Then they went to the log to kill the snake. In a few moments a shout of laughter was heard. The boys held up the snake for all to see. It was a whiplash.

And there you stop, for you have made your point. The details of the homeward journey do not belong here at all; as Kipling says, that is another story.

The first point, then, is to decide upon your main theme, or chief interest. That decided upon, how shall you begin the story? It is interesting to **Beginning** compare the openings of famous stories. **the story.**

This is the beginning of Dickens's *Bleak House* :

London. Michaelmas term nearly over, and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln's Inn Hall. Implacable November weather. As much mud in the streets as if the waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth. . . . Smoke lowering down from chimney-pots, making a soft, black drizzle, with flakes of soot in it as big as full-grown snow-flakes—gone into mourning, one might imagine, for the death of the sun. Dogs, indistinguishable in mire. Horses, scarcely better; splashed to their very blinkers. Foot-passengers, jostling one another's umbrellas, in a general infection of ill temper. . . . Fog everywhere.

That is an example of opening by description. Note how it fulfils the rule just laid down in regard to plot.

Bleak House is a sad story, and this opening picture of a dreary November day prepares you for the mood of the story to come.

Another form of opening is illustrated in *John Halifax, Gentleman* :

“Get out o’ Mr. Fletcher’s road, ye idle, lounging little —”

Vagabond, I think the woman, Sally Watkins, once my nurse, was going to say, but she changed her mind. My father and I both glanced round, surprised at her unusual reticence of epithet ; but when the lad addressed turned, fixed his eyes on each of us for a moment, and made way for us, we ceased wonder. Ragged, muddy, and miserable as he appeared, the boy looked anything but a vagabond.

“Thee need not go into the wet, my lad. Keep close to the wall, and there will be shelter enough both for us and thee,” said my father.

This form, in which the story commences at once, is called plot opening. Observe here, too, how the author obeys the principle of keeping prominent the main idea. As the title of the book implies, the hero, although poor, is a gentleman, and this is suggested in the very beginning when even the scolding old woman forebore to call him a vagabond. Plot opening has an advantage over description in that it engages the interest at once.

A third form of opening is illustrated in Kipling’s *Bread upon the Waters* :

If you remember my improper friend Brugglesmith, you will also bear in mind his friend McPhee, chief engineer of the *Breslau*. . . . He was never a racing engineer, and took special pride in saying as much before the Liverpool men ; but he had a thirty-two years' knowledge of machinery and the humors of ships. One side of his face had been wrecked through the bursting of a pressure-gauge in the days when men knew less than they do now, and his nose rose grandly out of the wreck, like a club in a public riot. There were cuts and lumps on his head, and he would guide your forefinger through his short iron-gray hair and tell you how he had come by his trade-marks. He owned all sorts of certificates of extra-competency, and at the bottom of his cabin chest of drawers, where he kept the photograph of his wife, were two or three Royal Humane Society medals for saving lives at sea.

This is an example of opening by characterization, the third method of beginning a story. These three methods, sometimes singly, sometimes combined, are the ones most frequently used in the opening.

For carrying forward a narrative it is difficult to give specific suggestions. The general principle to bear in mind is, that the narrative must be interesting. If you are writing about some very important event, **Carrying on** the facts themselves will hold the reader's **the story.** attention, but if you are writing of small affairs, or if the story is purely imaginary, it must be made interesting. Perhaps the best advice is that of Charles Reade, who gave a recipe for a successful novel in a sentence :

“Make 'em laugh ; make 'em cry ; make 'em wait.” Humor, pathos, and suspense, he declares, are the essentials. The principle of suspense is an important one. It means that the reader must always be waiting for something. As soon as the hero is delivered from one difficulty, he must be beset by another, or the heroine must be in trouble, and you read on to see how it comes out. This principle is well understood by those ingenious persons who write the serials in cheap story papers : each chapter ends with some thrilling situation, and you feel that you must get the next number to see how it comes out.

Another suggestion for holding the interest of your reader is, avoid long passages of description, or of comment on characters. Robert Louis Stevenson says, “ No human being ever talked of scenery for more than three minutes at a time, which makes one suspect that we hear too much of it in literature.” Some description is, as we have seen, essential to good narration, but long descriptive passages make a story drag ; practised novel-readers, they say, usually skip such parts. And so with characterization. A few sentences of comment are enough, at least in one place. The most artistic method of characterization is that which uses very little comment, but the character is shown indirectly, as in the following example from *Silas Marner* :

The door opened, and a thick-set, heavy-looking young man entered, with the flushed face and the gratuitously elated bearing which mark the first stage of intoxication. . . . The handsome brown spaniel that lay on the hearth retreated under the chair in the chimney-corner.

The dog knew what to expect when Dunsey entered. Now George Eliot might have told us that Dunsey Cass was a young man who was somewhat dissipated, and whose nature was cruel, with that mean form of cruelty which likes to torture beings that are at his mercy, — but how much better is the way she has suggested all that.

To end a narrative, stop. It used to be the fashion to go on and comment upon the events, or draw a moral from them. If you have told the story aright, the moral will be clear without a guide-post. If the story is pathetic, and it is necessary for you to tell the reader so, you have failed in telling the story.

EXERCISES

1. Write an account of some incident you have witnessed, after the manner of the sketch "On the Foot-log." Decide upon the main point to be brought out, and put in nothing that does not bear upon this.

2. Write a narrative on The Most Amusing Thing I Ever Saw. You will probably feel when you write it that the account is not nearly as funny as the inci-

dent itself; if you can make it funny at all you are succeeding.

3. Write an autobiography. This should be not a mere list of facts and dates, but it should also give motives, to some extent; what led you to do this or that.

4. Write a pretended autobiography, perhaps the story of your life as you would like it to be. This is fiction, but a form of fiction which demands a close semblance of reality, so nothing improbable should be introduced.

5. The Adventures of a Nickel, — who were its owners; what it was spent for; its final fate.

6. Have you heard, perhaps from a grandmother, tales of pioneer hardship, or of strange events in the early history of your family? If so, here is excellent material for narration.

7. Read some of Miss Wilkins's stories in the volume called *A New England Nun*, and try a sketch of a person in your neighborhood in her manner. Note how fully and artistically she gives characterization; this element and description predominate over plot in her stories.

8. Write an account of a walking trip, a canoe or bicycle trip. Read Stevenson's *Inland Voyage*, and see how he makes trifles interesting.

9. Look over a novel you have read recently and see how the principles of narration are applied. Does it

open with plot, description, or characterization? Are the descriptive passages long? too long? Is the characterization given by comment, or are you left to infer it from what the people do and say? Find an instance of suspense in the narrative. Does the author stop when the story is told, or does he add comment? The same questions apply to a biography or a history.

CHAPTER III

EXPOSITION

EXPOSITION is explanatory writing. Mr. James Bryce in his *American Commonwealth* tells how we are governed ; Miss Parloa in her cook-book tells how to make marmalade ; and both books are exposition. This class includes a large part of the writing done to-day. An account of a new submarine boat ; directions for weaving baskets ; how volcanoes are formed ; what are the characteristics of Browning's poetry ; why insanity is increasing, — all these subjects come under the head of exposition. And in exposition, just as in narration, there are a few simple laws that must be observed.

In expository writing your task is to explain something which you know to some one who does not know. That implies, first, knowledge on your part. If the thing to be imparted is not clear to you, you cannot make it clear to any one else. If that paper on Browning is to be given by you at the next meeting of the club, and you have a somewhat vague idea of the subject, the ideas you will convey to your hearers will be vaguer still. So at the

outset we may lay it down as a positive rule never to attempt exposition unless you understand your subject.

"But," you say, "I must write that paper on Browning. It has been assigned to me, and I must do it." Then the best thing to do is to make yourself familiar with your subject. And that brings us to the first step in exposition — obtaining material.

If you have a public library within reach, go there and consult — not the librarian, but the card catalogue. This is usually what is known as a dictionary catalogue, in which all the books are catalogued three **Getting material.** times: under the author's name, under the title, and under the subject. That is, Henry George's *Progress and Poverty* would be entered first by the name of the author, under the letter "G." Then a card would be made out for the title, and this placed among the cards in "P." And finally, as the book deals with political economy, a third card would be written, headed "Political Economy," and this placed in its proper position. The advantage of this triple cataloguing will soon be apparent. Opening the drawer marked "Br" we soon come to our author's name. The first cards give the titles of all books by Browning that the library contains. Find an edition that is complete in one volume, as that is most convenient for reference. Then turn over the cards rapidly until you come to those with

the word "Browning" written in red ink. These are the books about Browning by other people. The advantage of the dictionary system is now manifest. All books written on Browning, and all books on other subjects which have chapters on Browning, are here brought together for your selection. And without troubling the librarian, you can see for yourself what the library contains on any given subject.

But suppose that you consult these books, one after the other, and still do not find the precise piece of information you are in search of. There is yet another chance, the periodicals. Ask the librarian for Poole's Index, or for the Cumulative Index. These works, similar in scope, contain indexes of the contents of all the principal American and English quarterly, monthly, and weekly periodicals, from their beginning to the present year; the Cumulative Index brings it down even to the current month. These indexes, too, are arranged on the dictionary plan, so that by turning to the heading "Browning" you can find all the reviews, criticisms, and discussions that have ever appeared in the periodical press. The card catalogue and the index to periodicals are simply invaluable as aids to literary workers: they open to you at once, upon any subject, the whole resources of the library.

By this time you have probably secured references

enough. And as you read and take notes, and more notes, and see how much is still to be read, perhaps the conviction dawns upon you that you have chosen a very broad subject. You see that experienced writers discuss "Browning's Optimism," or "Brown-
Limiting the subject.
 ing's Attitude Towards Christianity," or

"Browning's Views on Art," or perhaps they deal with a single poem; you have undertaken to cover the whole scope of his writings. If grace is vouchsafed you, you will see your error. And you will learn a very important lesson: that exposition should be limited in its scope. To use a homely illustration, no person would attempt to discuss cake-baking, all kinds of cakes in all kinds of ways, and do it all in ten minutes. Yet that same person will attempt a subject in literature or art or economics which is quite as broad in its scope, and far more difficult to expound. Again, with a broad subject, a person has no idea where to begin, nor where to leave off. Ask a skilled engineer to talk for ten minutes on machinery, and he will be at a loss what to say. Ask him to explain the principle of the ball governor, and he will give you a clear explanation. Limit your subject, then, when you aim to make clear what is not known.

Let us suppose that the initial difficulties have been surmounted. You have a well-defined subject, and have

collected considerable material. What next? There are two plans that may be followed. One, perhaps the most natural, is to go ahead and write your paper. The other is, to arrange your ideas into some logical order, and, putting down the chief points, make an outline. By the first method one will perhaps write with more spontaneity; by the second, one will write more logically, and therefore more clearly. It seems to be the

Making an outline. case that some minds work best by one method, some by the other. It is safe to say, however, that even if one writes without an outline, it is best to go over the work afterwards and criticise it very carefully from the point of view of arrangement. For it must always be kept in mind that in exposition you are attempting to tell people something they do not know, and for this a logical order of presentation is almost imperative. A good illustration of this is found in Bryce's *American Commonwealth*. One chapter of this work is devoted to the Senate. A little study of that chapter shows that the following topics are discussed:

1. Congress consists of two bodies.
2. The Senate: how elected.
3. Its functions: legislative, executive, and judicial.
4. It represents the states as separate commonwealths.
5. Advantages of this plan: (a) It gives the Senate a character distinct from the House.

6. (b) It makes a link between the state governments and the national government.
7. Senators often elected substantially by direct vote.
8. Senators vote as individuals.
9. Length of the senatorial term.
10. Resulting permanence of the Senate.
11. Powers of the Senate in money bills.
12. Rules of procedure.
13. Manner of voting.
14. Secret sessions.

Now when Mr. Bryce first visited the Senate, as an Englishman familiar with the House of Lords, perhaps he was most strongly impressed with the difference in externals between the two bodies, the lords meeting in a lofty hall with rich windows, the lord chancellor in gown and wig, the bishops in their vestments. With all this in his mind he is struck by the contrast of the modern, severe, and practical appearance of the Senate. And in writing about the Senate he might very naturally set down this first impression at the beginning of the chapter. But he did not, for the differences between the two bodies lie far deeper than externals, and he chose to put the more important parts first. It illustrates the point that one who writes without a definite plan seldom chooses the best arrangement.

Note, too, the orderly way in which topics 4, 5, and 6 follow each other. Here again, Mr. Bryce was prob-

ably most strongly impressed by the fact that the Senate had a different character from the House, yet he does not state that first, but gives it in its proper place as one of the results of the manner of choosing senators. Another point worth noting in this piece of exposition is, that the list of topics given above is also the list of paragraphs ; that is, each topic constitutes a paragraph. The principle of paragraph structure is so important as to demand separate consideration.

Most persons write without making paragraphs at all. They will either write every sentence as a paragraph, or they write on without a pause and put the whole article into one paragraph. Now a sentence is not a paragraph. An article is not a paragraph. The paragraph proper stands between these two : it is made up of a number of sentences, and as these sentences deal with one principal idea, the paragraph is a unit. The article as a whole is made up of a number of these units. Paragraphing, then, is not a mere arbitrary thing, but rests upon the logical structure of the composition. You unconsciously recognize this principle in reading : when you come to the indention that marks a new paragraph, you expect a new subject. The rule, then, seems simple : Every time you take up a new principal idea, make a new paragraph.

But one qualification should be added. In the out-

line given above, sections 5 and 6 deal with the same general topic, — the advantages of our method of electing senators ; why are they not in one paragraph? Because each of the two subheads of the topic is discussed at some length, and hence assumes importance enough to deserve a separate paragraph. In section 3, however, there are three subheads, but each of these is dismissed in a sentence, so they are all grouped into one paragraph. The rule as modified may be stated thus : Make a new paragraph wherever there is a decided change of thought, and make new paragraphs for minor points if they are discussed at some length.

After the outline comes the writing. In exposition, the great requisite is clearness. Something has been done to secure this by proper arrangement. Another means is by simplicity in expression. There is danger of taking too much for granted on the part of the reader. When one writer says that Milton's best sonnets are in the Guittonian form, he makes a statement that to most of his readers is meaningless. Every art, every profession, has a set of terms peculiar to itself. When a man grows familiar with these technical terms he finds them very convenient, and is likely to use them as though they were generally understood, while in truth they pass current among a few only. If such words are used, they should always be explained.

Exposition
must be
clear.

To sum up what has been said about expository writing : Never take a subject unless you are familiar with it ; limit your subject, not attempting to cover too much ground ; outline your paper, preferably before writing ; put your ideas on one subject into one place, and make that a paragraph ; and be sure — first, last, and always — that you make your meaning clear to persons who are not familiar with your subject.

EXERCISES

1. Write an exposition of some process with which you are familiar. If you know how to make bricks, how to tone photographs, how to organize a school, how to raise flax, how to make a chocolate cake, or how to become a successful canvasser, write it out. Especial pains must be taken to make every step clear. The test for this paper is to read it to some one who knows nothing about the subject, and see whether he thinks he could perform the work from your directions.

2. How Our City is Governed. Who are the men who control the paving and lighting and appoint the police force ? How are they elected ? How long do they serve ? What are their powers ? Tell it all so that an intelligent visitor from Persia would understand the workings of a section of democracy.

3. Why is Longfellow Our Most Popular Poet? For this you will depend partly upon your own thinking, partly upon books. Be careful that this does not slip into a mere biography: keep your subject in mind, and put in nothing that does not bear upon it.

4. The Benefits of a Public Library. Here, too, you will depend partly upon books. It is best, however, to do your own thinking before you go to other sources. Get together your own ideas, and set them down in order, then go to books.

5. The Defects of Our Public Schools. What are they? Write them down as separate headings, arrange them in what seems the logical order, and discuss them.

6. The Character of Franklin, or Goldsmith, or Gladstone, or another great man whom you admire. In order to set forth the characteristics of the man, it may be necessary to relate some events of his life, but do not let the paper become a mere biography. Your aim should be to show what the man was, not what he did.

CHAPTER IV

SPOKEN DISCOURSE

THE previous chapters have been devoted to what is written to be read ; this will discuss what is written to be spoken. The two classes have much in common, yet there are certain points peculiar to oral discourse.

To begin with a simple case, suppose you are to give a " talk " on birds, or on developing films, or on Leonardo da Vinci, or on the sweat-shop, or some other subject with which you are familiar. The first step is the same as in expository writing — to make an outline. For example, a subject like The Sweat-shop might be discussed thus :

1. Explanation of the term.
2. How sweat-shops are conducted.
3. Insufficient wages and the results.
4. Dangers from unsanitary conditions.
5. Attempts to control sweat-shops by legislation.
6. Suggestions for further legislation.

After the outline, the next step is writing out what you would like to say. Most persons find it hard to start, and usually write a page or two preparatory to saying anything.

A short paper often needs no introduction at all ; at most a sentence or two should suffice. Begin on your subject, then, with as little explanation or apology as possible. In writing, try to keep to the style of conversation, that is, be simple and direct. Bear in mind the audience for whom you are writing, and ask yourself occasionally, Will they understand this ? or, Will they be interested in this ?

There is a difference between writing and speaking in this respect. In writing, your book or article appears, and people decide from the title whether they want to read it or not. If they begin, and do not like it, they can stop. But the speaker has the audience at his mercy. Many of the people did not come to hear him ; they came because it was their duty to attend the meeting, or because they wanted to hear the other speakers. And even for those who came to hear him, if they should be disappointed, there is no escape. So the speaker is under a peculiar obligation to make himself understood, and to make himself interesting. It follows that he should be brief. Of all the speeches you have ever heard, how many did you wish were longer ? And how many — but it would be cruel to put the question. If you feel that you cannot do justice to your subject in a short speech, see if you cannot limit the subject. If you are so full of Leonardo da Vinci that you cannot stop under half an hour, take as a subject his Last Supper.

When your paper is written, shall you commit it to memory, shall you read it, or shall you actually give it as a "talk," without notes? Of the three methods, the first is the worst. To declaim what you have carefully memorized is almost inevitably to produce the effect of the schoolboy speaking a piece. If you forget—and you are sure to forget—you are lost. To **Spoken or read.** read your paper has certain advantages: you can proceed with more confidence, and you can be sure of saying just what you want to say. But it has the objection of interposing a barrier between you and your hearers. You are not talking to them, they feel, you are reading a paper; the relation is not so direct. It is therefore much harder to retain their attention.

The ideal way is to give your "talk" as a talk, without letting the preparation show in any way. Your outline and your written draft of your remarks were necessary to guide you, but they are like the scaffolding of a building, they should not appear when the structure is complete. If you are familiar with your subject, and if you have the outline well in mind, you will do better to trust to the moment for the exact words. Then you can come into that close relation with your hearers which holds their attention, and you yourself, uplifted by the occasion, will choose instinctively better words than the ones you had written at home.

Another form of oral discourse that is often called for is the address. An address is somewhat more formidable, both to give and to hear, than the talk. It calls for more care, both in preparation and in delivery.

The preparation is essentially the same as for **The address.** exposition, and the suggestions made in the preceding chapter about familiarity with the subject, how to get material in a library, and the use of the outline, all apply here.

If you draw upon books for your material, it is necessary to give credit where it is due. To quote a sentence or a paragraph without indicating that it is a quotation is, of course, not honest. But suppose that you change a few words, so that it is not a direct quotation, must you still give credit? Certainly, for you have taken the author's thoughts. A slight change in the wording does not give you property in an idea, any more than stealing a coat and cutting it down to fit you would make it your coat. Of course facts that are common property, such as scientific truths, or established facts of history, it is not necessary to credit; they do not belong to one man more than to another. But where there is the right of personal property in an idea, that right should **Crediting material.** be respected. For example, if you are writing an address upon Washington, you take the facts of his life from a book, and it is not necessary to give credit

for them. But if at the end of the book there were an elaborate comparison between Washington and Jefferson, and you inserted that in your speech, taking up the same points in the same order, but putting them in your own words, it would still be necessary to give credit. This may be done by a phrase such as, "John Fiske has shown the contrast between these two men," etc. Such crediting does not weaken the effect of your address, rather strengthens it by giving it the authority of a great writer.

In the address, as in the talk, the speaker is under an obligation to interest his audience. And whether an address is interesting or not will depend largely upon the selection of material. In our speech on Washington, for example, if the speaker thinks it necessary to begin with Washington's parents, then relates his birth, childhood, youth, and the subsequent events of his life, **Selection of material.** painstakingly producing an abridged biography of the man, it is sure to prove uninteresting. The aim should rather be to make one's hearers realize Washington's heroism, or his wisdom, or the application of his counsels to the present time. This is the point to be brought out, and for this the precise year of his birth is of no importance whatever. We are back at our old problem of plot in narration: it is necessary to have a main theme clearly in mind, a line of thought that shall

run through the whole address, and then to cut out everything that does not bear plainly upon this.

In writing an address, as in a talk, it is best to keep close to the language of common life. Have you observed that people no longer deliver orations? They do not often make speeches; they prefer to give addresses, or talks. And this change in name is significant of a change in the thing. An oration suggests something formal, dignified, labored; an address is free, informal, practical. The style of public speaking has grown more colloquial since the days when the framers of the Constitution debated together. In Lincoln's "Gettysburg Speech," regarded as one of the masterpieces of modern oratory, one can see the power of plain words to express great conceptions, and express them adequately and nobly. Flights of oratory are confined chiefly to college students, and to members of the sophomore class at that. In particular, the beginning of the address should be free from any attempt at oratorical soaring. To begin in a lofty style makes it necessary to come down towards the close, producing an anticlimax.

In the arrangement of the parts of an address, the principle of close logical order is not so binding as it is in discourse that is to be read. A speaker often begins by telling a humorous story, which may have no connec-

tion with his subject at all, yet it is justifiable because it gains him the attention of his audience, and helps to get their good-will for what is to follow. But one rule is imperative: whatever the beginning, the end should be reserved for the most important part. Here the style, if desired, may rise to a loftier plane, to suit the thought; here all your earnestness, all your power, all your command of oratory, is needed to stamp in the impression you would make.

A point that is important to remember in public speaking is, that abstract ideas are far less impressive than concrete ones. If you are trying to awaken the voters of your ward to a sense of their duty in the coming election, do not talk to them of civic responsibilities and municipal debauchery, but tell them exactly how much Alderman Jones got for voting for the gas "grab," and how he got it.

The delivery of an address is for most persons the most difficult part of all. One suggestion that is very helpful is, Don't be in a hurry to begin. After rising to **Delivering** speak, pause for a moment, to gain com-
the address. mand of the situation. Elbert Hubbard says, "No speaker can afford to begin until the audience comes to him. An audience is a goggle-eyed, thousand-legged, many-headed thing that you must subdue or it will subdue you." The embarrassment that most persons feel

when addressing an audience is much greater with a large audience than a small one. This is due partly to the fact that your attention is diffused over so many people : you cannot look at the whole audience, and the attempt to do so confuses you — there is nothing to focus your attention upon. It is a good plan to select one or two persons in the audience whose faces show they are interested, and speak to them. As for gestures, perhaps the best advice is to leave them to themselves. If you feel like making a gesture, make it. To practise gestures, and to try to put them in at certain places, will almost always produce an unnatural, often ludicrous, effect. One can make a speech effectively without a gesture. Gestures that are natural and graceful add much, but forced, studied gestures are worse than none.

Nearly all that has been said of the address applies as well to the toast. This is really a short address, in which one puts the wit or wisdom of a half-hour speech into five minutes. Here, more than **The toast.** ever, brevity is the golden rule. One other suggestion may be helpful : In giving a toast, be yourself. Do not try to give a toast like this humorist or that master of epigram ; give your own kind of speech. But you reply, " I'm not a wit ; I'm just a plain person, without any brilliancy at all, and I don't see why they put me down for this toast anyway." Well, the people who put you on

knew you were not brilliant, and do not expect brilliancy from you. And it is much better to appear as a plain person who is making a plain speech than as a plain person who is trying to be brilliant, and not succeeding.

Debate is a form of oral discourse in which there is some revival of interest at present. Here the use of an outline, for the proper arrangement of points, is almost imperative. Equally important is the principle that no manuscript should come between the speaker and the audience. The use of notes is common, but to read a debate is not debating. Get yourself full of your subject, and the words will come when you want them. It is a common mistake of beginners in debate to attempt to cover too much ground. Most questions that are debated in public are entirely too broad to be discussed in all their aspects in a single evening. The beginner does not know this; he finds twenty points on his side, and thinks he has the case won when he has taken a minute to state each one. The old debater selects two or three of the weakest of these points, shows their weakness, and by inference weakens the whole side; then, taking up his own side, brings forward three or four strong points, devoting all his skill to stating these so clearly and forcibly that every one feels their weight, — and wins his case.

Debate.

In conclusion, it must be remembered that the study of rules alone goes but a little way toward making one a good speaker. Practice is the thing, and he who aims to become a good speaker will lose no opportunity to appear in public. Yet something may be gained from books. To read the orations and addresses of masters in the art is to catch hints that are often helpful. A good collection of speeches, including orations, lectures, addresses, and after-dinner speeches, is that edited by Thomas B. Reed, in ten volumes, entitled *Modern Eloquence* (Morris). For debates, an excellent manual is *Briefs for Debate*, by Brookings and Ringwalt (Macmillan). This contains suggestions for preparing and conducting a debate, with references to arguments on both sides. Another book of value is Alden's *Art of Debate* (Holt).

EXERCISES

1. Make an outline for a talk on some subject with which you are familiar, such as : Advantages of a Literary Society ; The Servant Problem ; How to Camp Out ; How to train for an Athletic Contest. The outline should contain at least four principal headings, with several subheads under each.

2. Write out the talk as outlined, trying to keep the style of spoken rather than of written discourse.

3. Ex-President Cleveland, or some other prominent man of whom you know something, is to make a speech in your city. Write a brief address introducing him.

4. An outline for an argument is called a brief. Prepare a brief on one of the following subjects, taking either side :

Co-education in high schools is undesirable.

A city should own its street railways.

An income tax should be established.

Secret societies in schools are an evil.

Senators should be elected by direct popular vote.

Athletics take too prominent a place in school life.

A single session of school is better than morning and afternoon sessions.

CHAPTER V

NEWSPAPER REPORTING AND CORRESPONDENCE

PROBABLY nine-tenths of all that is written for publication to-day is written for newspapers. A weekly newspaper publishes in a year enough matter to make easily five books of ordinary size. There are fifteen thousand weekly papers in the United States, or an equivalent of seventy-five thousand books. Add to this over two thousand daily papers, or the equivalent of twelve thousand weeklies, which gives sixty thousand volumes more. As the number of books actually published each year is about ten thousand, it will be seen that the estimate of nine-tenths is a low one.

To one who wishes to write for publication, then, the newspaper offers the fairest field. And it is a field in which many men famous in literature have made their beginning. Edmund Clarence Stedman was once a newspaper correspondent; Rudyard Kipling began as a reporter; Mark Twain and Bret Harte were newspaper men; Eugene Field and Richard Harding Davis are later instances.

There are two ways of entering the field of journalism. One may write articles occasionally and send them to the papers, or he may boldly plunge in as a reporter. In the case of the occasional contributor, the path to success is not easy. Your articles may come back to you when others that you know are inferior are published, and you rail at the blindness of editors. In most cases the editor is right in rejecting your matter, and in printing other articles not so well written, for his aim is not primarily to publish literature, but to publish news.

News, from the editor's point of view, may be defined as any occurrence not previously published which is interesting to a number of people. Suppose your neighbor invites you to dinner. That is not news, as **What is news ?** the editor sees it. But if he invites twenty people, the dinner is transformed into a "function," and the editor sends a reporter there. It is no longer a private affair, but belongs to the doings of society, and as such is news. If the dinner is in honor of some visiting celebrity, or given to advance some cause, and there are distinguished people present who make speeches, then it is transformed into a "banquet," and appears on the first page of the paper, as important news. And if at this banquet some distinguished guest should be stricken with paralysis, or fall dead, as happened at a great banquet in New York, then this dinner is the most important news

of the day, and is told with big headlines and illustrations.

So news rises in importance, and to the various occurrences of the day the editor assigns space in proportion as they are interesting to many or few people. This is his test for admitting or rejecting matter, and this is the best guide for the would-be contributor. If you wish to write for the newspapers, ask yourself whether the subjects which you would write upon fulfil this requirement. In other forms of writing it is a rule that to write well you must take a subject in which you are interested ; in newspaper work a further qualification is necessary, — that the subject be one in which other people are interested. Certain subjects are always interesting. War, crime, politics, casualties, amusements, society, — anything new upon these topics always commands attention.

Then there are other topics which are of passing interest. If you should prepare an exposition of Herbert Spencer's philosophy and take it to a newspaper office to-morrow, no editor would print it, no matter how well it was done. But just after Herbert Spencer's death your article would have been accepted. An interview with Mrs. Carrie Nation, with Dr. Parkhurst, with John Mitchell, is good news matter while these people are prominently before the public, but when they pass, their opinions are no longer interesting. Timeliness, then,

has a great deal to do in determining the availability of matter for a newspaper.

But even a timely article may be rejected if it is written in an unsuitable style. The great requisite of newspaper **Newspaper style.** style is clearness. Reflect how rapidly you read a paper, remember that others read in the same way, and you will see how necessary it is that articles shall be written so as to be read quickly. There must be no balking at unfamiliar words, no twisting through the long convolutions of a much-involved sentence, no statement of facts so confused that one has to read them a second time to understand them: all must be clear and straightforward. In every sort of writing one must consider his readers, and adapt his style to their comprehension. The readers of newspapers are of all degrees of intelligence, from the highest to those just above illiteracy, and your aim should be to be intelligible to them all.

The occasional contributor to the newspapers usually aims to become a regular reporter. For most persons the life of a reporter holds both a charm and a mystery: a charm in the opportunity it affords to go everywhere, to see everything, to get behind the scenes in the drama of **Work of the reporter.** life; a mystery in that they have usually the vaguest idea of how news is obtained, and picture a reporter as a being who goes about everywhere

seeking for news, much as a dog investigates every brush heap in search of a possible rabbit. There is no such taking vague chances in making a newspaper. On every daily paper there is a man known as the city editor, whose function it is to look after all local events. Most of these are known beforehand, and the editor has their dates all recorded in a blank-book, called the "assignment book." He opens this book in the morning and sees that a certain criminal is to be tried that day ; that the funeral of a noted public man takes place in the afternoon ; there is also a political conference at a hotel ; and at night a mass-meeting of citizens, and a new play in the opera house. He calls in his reporters, and gives each one a certain item to "cover." Each man goes directly to his work, there is no chance about it, and the problem of reporting becomes a mere matter of going where you are sent, and writing what you see.

It sounds simple, does it not ? But any one who has gone through an apprenticeship in newspaper work will tell you that it is not quite so simple as it sounds. The first things you write are likely to be severely cut up by the editor's blue pencil. Sometimes they appear so changed that you hardly recognize them ; sometimes cut down to such small compass that you can hardly find them. You have been sent to write an obituary, for example (new reporters are usually given obituaries to

write, probably to hearten them for their work), and
What not to say. you have been told so much about the man's virtues that you feel what a loss he is to the world, and spend some time upon a graceful and fitting tribute to his memory. When your account appears you are surprised and pained to see that the editor has cut out that whole paragraph, and inserted instead a list of the clubs to which the man belonged. If you ask an old reporter about it, he will tell you not to write editorials for the news columns. If you are wise you will ponder upon the advice, and come to see that the function of a reporter is to state facts, not to comment upon them; that he should aim to be a transparent medium, so to speak, for the events of the day; they are to be seen through him, but without coloring.

Or you have been sent out to write up a fire, and the scene, with the volumes of heavy smoke pouring out, the red-shirted firemen, the hissing engines, the silent crowd massed outside the ropes, impresses your imagination, and you write a picturesque bit of description (feeling, as you write, that fine glow which comes at such times), and send it in to the editor. Presently there is a call from the inner office, and you go in.

"Jones, did you write this fire story?"

"Yes, sir." (You try not to look proud.)

"How much insurance was there on the building?"

"I — I don't know, sir."

"You don't know? And you wrote all this rot at the beginning, and didn't find out whether the building was insured or not? Go and get it as quick as you can."

And you have learned another lesson. In every item of news there are certain points which must be stated. These are not always such as occur to the new reporter. It is a good plan to read over the news columns from this point of view. Glancing at the headlines, you will see what the article is about. Then supposing you had been sent to "cover" that item, what particulars would you mention? Note them down, then read the article and see what you have missed.

Again, if you aim to be a successful reporter, you should cultivate the habit of looking at life with an open-eyed curiosity. You pass the court-house every day: do you know how a jury is selected? Would you know where to go to find out when a case comes up for trial? You see men at work paving the streets: do you know who hires them? Who gives out the contracts for city work? When does the board of aldermen meet, and who is the political leader in your ward? A **How to get news.** knowledge of facts like these is the working basis of successful reporting. Form the habit of picking up information wherever you can. Do you talk to the street car conductor occasionally, and listen to his story

of the hardships of a conductor's life? If you do, when the men go on strike you have the material for a good article, and you know where to go for further information. A famous French author comes to this country to lecture ; the enterprising journalist writes a column about the man and his position in French literature. People read it and wonder at the reporter's knowledge of the subject. He knew nothing at all about it, but he knew a man who did ; he went to this man and got the facts he wanted. There is no fact, open or secret, but is known to somebody, and one's success as a reporter will depend largely upon his ability to find that somebody and get the fact.

EXERCISES

1. Write a report of a lecture by some distinguished person. Points to be noted are : place ; time ; size of audience ; by whom the speaker is introduced ; appearance of the speaker ; his manner of delivery ; a brief outline of his remarks, perhaps with quotation of striking sentences. Write this the same evening, and next day compare your account with that published in the paper.

2. Write a report of a wedding, a reception, or other social event. Compare your report with that published in the paper : note what you have omitted, and what you have put in that is not necessary, from the point of view of the editor.

3. Write a report of a game of football or baseball. Keep the score carefully, note the good plays, write your report the same day, and compare it with the published account, as suggested in the preceding exercise.

4. Write an account of some public event, such as the dedication of a monument, the opening of a new school building, or any occurrence which attracts a number of people, and compare your account with that published in the paper.

5. If you live in a city, go to the market-house on Saturday, at the time it is most thronged ; watch the scenes and the people, and make notes for an article on Buying their Sunday Dinners. This will be more than mere news : it gives opportunity for description, character-sketches, touches of humor or pathos.

6. Write an editorial suitable for publication on Washington's Birthday, discussing the significance of the day, perhaps with suggestions as to its proper observance.

7. Write an editorial on one of the following subjects and send it to the editor of your paper :

Should Our City Own its Waterworks ?

Electric Wires Should be Underground.

The Need of a Speed Regulation for Automobiles.

The Need of Better Highways.

Rural Free Delivery.

The Consolidation of Country Schools.

CHAPTER VI

WORDS, SENTENCES, AND PARAGRAPHS

EVERYTHING written, from a letter to an encyclopædia, is made up of three simple elements : words, sentences, and paragraphs. He who knows how to use these correctly can write a page, a volume, or a series of volumes, for it is but repeating these units of composition.

Words are the blocks with which we build. We who use the English language are fortunate in having a very great number and variety of these blocks. The latest English dictionary contains over three hundred thousand words, far more than in any other language, ancient or modern. But these words are not all equally good for our purposes ; some are clearer or more forcible than others, some are to be used only in special cases, some are not to be used at all. Our first concern, therefore, is to find some test by which to determine what words are suitable for our use.

This test is found in usage. If other people use a word, you can use it. That is the general principle, but it requires some modification. Shakespeare, for ex-

ample, used words which we cannot use. We cannot call a toad a "paddock," nor say "character" for handwriting. These words are now obsolete, and **Words** this gives us the first law of usage, that it **barred out**. must be present. Further, if we are careful about our speech, we shall not speak of "a hot time," or call a bicycle a "bike." These expressions are in present use, it is true, but they are not used by cultured people. So we have a second qualification of usage ; it must be reputable, that is, used by good writers and speakers. The third qualification of good use says that words must be national, that is, they must be used all over the country in the sense in which you use them. A word that is used only in one section of the country is called a provincialism. Thus Southerners say "I reckon" for "I suppose"; New Englanders call an omnibus "a barge"; people in German communities use the word "dumb," when they mean stupid. In various parts of the country a tin dinner-bucket is known as a "kettle," a "can," a "billy," and a "blick." Some of these words doubtless sound strange to you ; that is because they are unfamiliar. The term that you recognize sounds equally strange in another locality. All these expressions are provincialisms, and are forbidden by the canon which says that good use must be national.

The use of provincialisms is an error that we are

peculiarly likely to fall into, because in most cases we do not know that the words are provincialisms. A word that you learned as a child, that you have heard all your life, you suppose of course is a good word. Yet it is just these familiar expressions that are often provincialisms, and some day a visitor will surprise you by declaring that he never heard this or that expression till he heard you use it. It is well to learn as soon as possible the provincialisms of your locality, and try to free your speech of them.

This test of usage, however, is but a negative one : it tells us what words to avoid, but not what ones to choose. A positive principle is this : In ordinary writing, prefer short, familiar words. Compare these two statements :

The man suffers from a bodily ailment.

The man is sick.

Is there any doubt which is the stronger? The short, familiar word is the one most readily understood, and the one that has most force. The principle would appear to be so obvious as not to require stating, yet experience shows that this error is one which beginners very often make. They seem to think that the words of ordinary speech are not good enough for writing, so they hunt for long and unfamiliar words, putting their thoughts upon stilts, so to

The short word.

speaking, where they move very awkwardly. Years ago Lowell called attention to this vice of style as shown in some newspapers, where reporters try to make little items seem important by telling them in big words. A fire is no longer a fire ; it is a conflagration, or even a holocaust. If a building is burned, the reporter solemnly writes that "the edifice was consumed." If a crowd gathered to watch it, we are told that "a vast concourse assembled to witness the conflagration." Thus simple thoughts masquerade in pompous diction, puzzling to simple readers, laughable to educated ones. This is not saying that one should never use a long word ; there are times when a long word and no other will answer ; but when there is a choice between a short, familiar word and a long, unfamiliar one, the short word is usually to be preferred.

Another principle in the choice of words is illustrated by the following sentences, descriptive of the trade of a great merchant :

Hot Africa sifted for him the golden sands of her rivers, and gathered up the ivory tusks of her great elephants ; the East came bringing him rich shawls and spices and teas, and the effulgence of diamonds, and the gleaming purity of large pearls.

He received wealth in every form from various parts of the world.

Both sentences express the same idea, but how much richer, more suggestive, is the first. And if you analyze the difference, you will find that it is a matter of using specific or general terms. Gold, ivory, shawls, diamonds—all these are included in the general term “wealth,” yet the separate, specific terms suggest so much more. The specific word presents a definite image to the mind. If you write, “We passed a little shop shaded by a huge tree,” I have a vague idea of what you saw. It might have been a blacksmith’s shop under a spreading chestnut, or a marble-cutter’s shop under a weeping willow. But if you write, “We passed a little wagon-shop beneath a huge elm tree,” I have a picture in my mind at once. And not only in descriptive writing is the specific word the better. In narrative it is better to say, “We spent a week at the Waldorf,” than to write, “We spent some time at a hotel in New York.”

When words are combined into sentences new problems arise. The first and the most important quality that a sentence should possess is unity. Compare these sentences :

Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence, and his son fought to defend it.

Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence, and his son worked in a sausage factory.

The second sentence is rhetorically about as bad as a sentence can be. It is bad because it violates the principle of unity. That principle may be stated **Sentence** thus: Every sentence should contain one **unity** principal idea, and but one. There may be two ideas in a sentence, or three, or more, but they must be related, and subordinate to one main idea. In the first sentence above, the main idea is the Declaration of Independence; in the second sentence there are two main ideas, with no relation between them. Now it is not often that people write such sentences as the second one, but they do write other sentences which violate the principle of unity. A very common form of error is writing sentences like this:

We walked to the river and enjoyed the view from the bridge, where we could see the church built by Mr. Stewart in memory of his daughter, who was killed in a railway accident. Here the ideas are related, but what is the principal one, the walk to the river? the view? the church? or the daughter's death? In most cases like this the remedy is to cut the sentence in two. Thus:

We walked to the river and enjoyed the view from the bridge. We could see the church built by Mr. Stewart in memory of his daughter.

And that is enough. The manner of her death has nothing to do with the view.

A second principle of sentence-structure is illustrated by the following example :

John pounded on the log where the squirrel was hidden, while I stood by ready to shoot it if it should attempt to escape from its hiding-place to take refuge elsewhere.

Read that sentence and see whether you can detect any fault in it. If not, read it again and see whether you can omit any words as not necessary. You will find that it may be reduced to this :

John pounded on the log where the squirrel was, and I stood ready to shoot it.

That tells all that the first sentence told, and in half as many words. The other words were mere lumber, **Needless** cumbering the sentence while adding **words.** ing to its meaning. The use of unnecessary words is another characteristic of most people's writing. They could say what they have to say in fewer words and say it better. It is excellent training to go through something you have written and see how many words you can cut out.

The subject of paragraphs has already been spoken of in the chapter upon Exposition. It was pointed out there that a paragraph deals with one of the chief thoughts of a composition ; it is, in other words, a unit

as truly as a sentence is a unit. These units are of varying lengths, from a sentence to a page or more. But it is hardly possible to say much on any subject **Paragraph** in less than three sentences, so few para- **length.**

graphs are shorter than that. On the other hand, a paragraph covering a page or more indicates close thinking, and is hard reading. Short paragraphs give an open, attractive look to a page, and the reader finds it easier to carry away the thoughts when they are put up in these small, handy bundles. It is well, then, to avoid making paragraphs too long or too short. The average length in modern prose is slightly more than one hundred words. This does not mean that we should try to make all our paragraphs of this length; some will necessarily be longer, because they treat of important topics, which demand fuller discussion. To write a single sentence as a paragraph is to give it great emphasis; this should be done, therefore, only when the sentence deserves such distinction.

Another point to be considered in paragraph-structure is arrangement. It is a fact that any one can verify by glancing over a printed page that the parts **Paragraph** of each paragraph that most readily catch the **arrange-** eye are the beginning and end. It follows, **ment.** therefore, that the important sentences in each paragraph should, in general, occupy these emphatic positions.

EXERCISES

1. Make a list of the provincialisms you have heard in your locality or elsewhere. Ask a friend from another state to tell you the peculiar expressions he notices in your neighborhood. Look up these words in an unabridged dictionary; the Century is especially good for such terms. If it gives the word as "local," "prov.," or "local U. S.," you know it for a provincialism.

2. Take some of your earlier papers written for these studies and criticise the use of words. Have you used long, unusual words where short, familiar ones would answer? Are there any unnecessary words? It is better if you can exchange papers and criticise each other.

3. Criticise your early papers, especially the descriptions, in the matter of general and specific words. Substitute specific words where you can, and note the gain in vividness.

4. Criticise your work, exchanging papers as suggested, from the standpoint of unity of sentences. It is best to keep these lines of study separate: go over your papers carefully with one thing in mind, then go over them again to correct them in other respects.

5. Criticise your paragraphs; first, as to unity. The test for this is to try to state, in a few words, the thought of each paragraph. Do this, writing a summary of each

paragraph, as was done for the chapter from Mr. Bryce in the article on Exposition. Would it be better to divide any long paragraphs, or to combine short ones which deal with the same topic? Are the important thoughts usually placed in the emphatic positions, or are they buried in the middle? Can you improve by rearrangement?

CHAPTER VII

QUALITIES OF STYLE

THE many qualities of style may be reduced to three : Clearness, Force, and Beauty. If you understand an article, at the first reading, the style has Clearness. If it holds your attention, it has Force. If it pleases you, it has Beauty. These three qualities of style are the essential ones ; they comprehend all others. Sometimes they are given different names : Clearness is disguised as Perspicuity ; Force is called Energy, or Strength ; Beauty is called Elegance, or Grace, or Harmony ; but the qualities are the same. Of the three, Clearness is the most important. If people do not understand what you say, they can hardly be interested in it, or pleased by it. Force and Beauty, then, depend upon Clearness, so it is doubly important to secure this. In the chapter on Exposition, the principle was emphasized that to make an idea clear to others it must first be clear to you. Clear writing depends primarily, then, upon clear thinking. Master your subject before you begin to write. Have clearly in mind what you want to say, and you can usually say it clearly.

That is a general principle ; there are some specific directions that will help to make one's style clear. The following sentences illustrate one way in which Clearness is often sacrificed :

Burke's father died when he was nine years of age.

If fresh milk does not agree with the baby, it should be boiled.

Both sentences are ambiguous for the same reason : the antecedent of the pronoun is not clear. This is a very frequent cause of obscurity.

Another source of obscurity, and one which often leads to ludicrous blunders, is the attempt on the part of a writer to use words, usually long words, whose meaning he does not fully understand. Thus Mrs. Malaprop speaks of her niece as being "as graceful as a young gazette," or "as headstrong as an allegory on the banks of the Nile." The second caution is, therefore, Use no word unless certain of its meaning.

Again, a sentence may be obscure because its parts are not properly placed. For example :

He delivered an eloquent address on the battle in the opera-house.

Some days afterward he boasted of his engagement to a young lady of the village.

The first sentence is hardly clear, but a moment's thought will show that the phrase "in the opera-house" belongs to "delivered." In the second sentence, however, the phrase "to a young lady of the village" may modify "boasted" or "engagement": it is perfectly ambiguous. If you would avoid obscurity, then, place qualifying words close to the words they modify.

Punctuation is another means of securing Clearness. The following examples show how the meaning of a sentence may be completely transformed by a change in punctuation:

That man says his neighbor is a crank.

That man, says his neighbor, is a crank.

If one has been careless about punctuation, it is a good plan to read aloud what has been written, notice where you pause naturally, and put punctuation marks at these places. This at first may lead one to punctuate too frequently, but that will soon adjust itself.

Force, the second quality of style, has been defined as the means of holding the reader's attention. In words, one way of securing this is by the choice of plain, simple terms. The idioms of our language, those expressions which are the despair of grammarians because they defy parsing, are often the deliberate choice of the rhetorician, for they have a force that is lacking in more regular constructions. When James Russell Lowell was making

a speech before a committee of Congress on the subject of international copyright, he used this sentence:

"There is one thing better than a cheap book, and that is a book honestly come by." **Force.**

"Come by" is an idiom, a homely one, yet Lowell, who knew his English as few men know it, who had thousands of learned terms at his command, deliberately chose this plain phrase. If you would know why he did so, substitute some word such as "acquired" or "obtained," and see how the sentence is weakened. Never be afraid to use a word because it is common, nor to use an idiom because it is used by plain people. Plain people's words are like their deeds; they have often a strength that culture lacks.

In sentence-structure, one way of gaining Force is to make your sentences short. Compare these two statements:

That man is not only a rascal, but he is a liar and a thief.

That man is a rascal. He is a liar. He is a thief.

The successive short sentences, like the blows of a trip-hammer, drive home the thought.

Another way of securing Force is by the use of the periodic sentence. Compare these forms:

Elizabeth's unconquerable pride was the characteristic of her nature most strongly marked, the one most helpful to her success, and the one which led to her downfall.

Of all the characteristics of Elizabeth's nature, the one most strongly marked, the one most helpful to her success, and the one which eventually led to her downfall, was her unconquerable pride.

In the second sentence, the emphasis upon the word "pride" is very marked. This is due to the periodic structure, by which the meaning is held in suspense until the very end of the sentence is reached. The first clause tells us that we are to learn something about Elizabeth's nature, the second tells us that it is her chief characteristic, the next that it helped her success most, the next that it led to her downfall; with each successive statement our interest is heightened to know what this characteristic is, so that when the word finally comes, it makes a marked impression.

Again, Force may be secured by the use of the balanced sentence. In this the phrases or clauses are made similar in form, and balanced against each other. Examples :

Measured by any high standard of imagination, Pope will be found wanting; tried by any test of wit, he is unrivalled.

All that I have, and all that I am, and all that I hope, I stake upon the results of this vote.

When successive sentences are made similar in form, we have what is known as parallel structure. This is another useful device for securing force. Macaulay's famous characterization of the Puritans, in his Essay on

Milton, derives much of its force from the skilful use of balanced sentences and parallel structure :

If they were unacquainted with the works of philosophers and poets, they were deeply read in the oracles of God. If their names were not found in the registers of heralds, they were recorded in the Book of Life. If their steps were not accompanied by a splendid train of menials, legions of ministering angels had charge over them. Their palaces were houses not made with hands; their diadems crowns of glory which should never fade away. . . . The very meanest of them was a being to whose fate a mysterious and terrible importance belonged, on whose slightest action the spirits of light and darkness looked with anxious interest, who had been destined, before heaven and earth were created, to enjoy a felicity which should continue when heaven and earth should have passed away.

If these sentences are read aloud, it will be seen that they deliver well. The balanced sentence is well adapted for what is written to be spoken.

It should be remembered that these rules for securing Force are not to be applied at all times. The rules for Clearness are of universal application, every sentence written should conform to them, but Force is required only in the more important parts of a production. To attempt to use short sentences continually, or balanced sentences continually, would produce intolerable monotony.

The third quality of style, Beauty, is more subtle, less subject to rule, than the others. A style may be beauti-

ful in many ways, and we must frankly confess that the beauty of any style is due not to the fact that the writer followed certain rules, but to the fact that he possessed taste, feeling, or imagination. Yet there are certain principles which will help us, if not to secure Beauty, at least to avoid its opposite. We may not be able to make our style graceful, but we can keep it from being rough or awkward. One way, for example, in which Beauty is sometimes sacrificed is by the too frequent repetition of a word. For example :

But this is but a part of his trouble.

I spent two years at this school ; it was the first school I liked, and I still prefer it to any other school.

The fault of repetition is more easily detected by oral reading. Indeed, it is a general principle that to avoid harsh or unpleasing expressions, one should read aloud what has been written.

A second way in which Beauty is sometimes sacrificed is in the structure of the sentence. Particularly is this apt to be the case when a preposition is misplaced. Note the awkwardness of the following sentences :

He had promised to make a call upon, and take a drive with, a friend of his sister's.

That sentence was a poor one to end his speech with.

Again, Beauty of style depends to some degree upon the length of sentences. In the first example below, observe the unpleasant effect of the continual use of short sentences :

The army was now ready to advance. All the supplies had been sent forward. The troops were anxious for the advance. Yet Gates delayed to give the word. It was not clear why he waited. No explanation has ever been offered of his conduct. It is certain that it resulted disastrously to our arms.

The army was now ready to advance. All the supplies had been sent forward, the troops were anxious for the advance, yet Gates delayed to give the word. It was not clear why he waited. No explanation has ever been given of his conduct, which certainly resulted disastrously to our arms.

It was said that the short sentence gives force, and this is true. But to use short sentences continually is as if one should shout continually at the top of one's voice. On the other hand, to use long sentences continually is to make one's style hard to read. Beauty demands the skilful mingling of long and short sentences. A page from De Quincey, from Stevenson, or Matthew Arnold will illustrate this point.

Beauty depends also in a large measure upon the choice of words. Certain expressions, very good in themselves, may be used so frequently that they are worn out. In description, for example, the phrases "pearly teeth," "fairy form," "raven locks," are in-

stances. Certain stock phrases, such as "useful as well as ornamental," "too numerous to mention," "last but not least," belong to the same class. The expressions are perfectly correct, and the meaning is clear; the only objection is that they have been used so often that they have a second-hand air about them. They are used in conversation, and no one would think of objecting to them there, but in writing they make one's style seem commonplace. In discussing Force, it was said that no word is too common for our use. That is true, but when you put two or three words together and form a phrase, that phrase may become so common that to use it argues a lack of originality.

EXERCISES

1. For the correction of the errors discussed in this paper, criticism by others is more helpful than self-criticism. Take some of the exercises written previously, exchange papers, and mark each other's mistakes. It is best merely to indicate errors, and return the paper to the writer for revision.

2. Read aloud a few pages from Lowell's *My Study Windows*, or Curtis's *Prue and I*, or Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero Worship*, and note how skilfully they employ long and short, periodic, balanced, and loose sentences. The good writer uses no one form of sentence, but is master of all.

CHAPTER VIII

LETTER WRITING

LETTERS are, after all, the one form of composition that is universal. We may go through life and play our parts quite respectably without ever making a speech or writing an article, but we cannot escape the postman. It is not the purpose of this chapter to give forms for business and social correspondence, but to discuss the kind of letter that is written oftenest, and offers most opportunity for self-cultivation in English, that is, the letter of friendship.

Much depends upon the mood in which one sits down to write a letter. It is a good rule never to write unless you feel like writing. If it is a blue day with you, you could sit down and order a dozen lead pencils, and the stationer be none the wiser, but beware of writing to a friend in such a mood. If you were talking to him, he would know by your expression, by the tone of your voice, that you were not yourself, and would make allowances. But in a letter he sees only the cool-
ness, and not the reason for it. Again, it is
not well to write when under great excitement. At such

When to
write.

times you say more than you mean. If you spoke these things, your friend, seeing your agitation, would understand that what you said was not your sober judgment. But when it is written in cold black and white, and read by some one a hundred miles away, it has quite a different effect. We have all, I suppose, written letters that we would be glad to recall: they are usually written at such times. Wait for calmer moments: your friends deserve your golden hours.

In the letter, as in other forms of composition, the beginning is often the hardest part. As most letters are written in answer to others, it would seem natural to take up your friend's letter and reply to it first. But it is a question whether this is best. Your thoughts are apt to run along the lines suggested by your friend, and your letter will seem like an echo of his own. A letter of friendship should be more than a mere reply: it should contain much that is new, that comes from yourself. The better way is to write your own letter first. Sit down, with your friend in mind, think of what you would tell him if he were present, and write as you would talk. Then, when you have exhausted your own budget, take up your friend's letter and answer it. This will make your letter more spontaneous, more individual.

The style of a letter of friendship may vary widely, yet there are two qualities which it should always possess:

charm and courtesy. Charm, that elusive thing which means so much, is not to be attained by following rules ; it springs from character, from temperament, and in part from mood. But courtesy is within the reach of all. Courtesy forbids, for example, the letter illegibly written.

What would be thought of a person who in conversation, out of sheer carelessness, would

Courtesy in letters.

mumble and mangle his words, so that people would have to ask him to repeat what he said? Yet is it any worse to write what must be read a second time? Courtesy, too, forbids the use of abbreviations. To conclude a letter with "Your affec. bro." suggests that the writer regards a letter as an unpleasant duty, to be gotten through with as soon as possible. Courtesy also demands that one should use some care in grouping his thoughts into paragraphs. Upon this subject Professor J. M. Hart of Cornell University expresses himself as follows :

The usual fault in private letters is that they run through page after page in utter confusion of subject, and without the slightest pause. The reader is expected to pass from the weather to cooks, or the want of cooks, to whooping-cough, the latest dancing party, Miss ——'s engagement, the ball game, mamma's headaches, and the newest fashions in hats, all in an unbroken series of sentences where half the commas should be periods and all the dashes should be commas. To make one's private letters too systematic and studied is to run the risk of appearing pedantic. But this extreme is easily avoided.

There is some truth here, especially in the reference to the dash. It should not be made the universal mark of punctuation.

The question as to what to put into a letter may be answered in a word: yourself. What you are doing, thinking, planning, what you read, what you see, what you hear—these are the things your friend will be glad to know. Your letters will be valued just in proportion as you put yourself into them. The best letters are usually those that have the least of so-called “news.”

**Put in
details.**

One of the secrets of good letter writing is fulness of detail. Any event may be made uninteresting by a general statement:

Yesterday we crossed the English Channel, and to-morrow we go towards London.

A letter made up of such statements is as dry as a guide-book. But a description of the passage, telling how the boat twisted about in the choppy waves of the channel; the view as the white cliffs of France faded from sight; an amusing blunder of the steward's at dinner—such things, slight in themselves, will bring vividly to your friend the scenes you are passing through, and make your letters a delight. The poet Gray knew how to make a letter interesting. The following was written from Southampton to his friend, Dr. Nicholls. It begins with a humorous excuse for delay in writing:

NOVEMBER 19, 1764.

SIR: I received your letter at Southampton, and, as I would wish to treat everybody according to their own rule and measure of good breeding, have against my inclination waited till now before I answered it, purely out of fear and respect, and an ingenuous diffidence of my own abilities. If you will not take this as an excuse, accept it at least as a well-turned period . . . always my principal concern.

So I proceed to tell you, that my health is much improved by the sea; not that I drank it, or bathed in it as the common people do. No! I only walked by it and looked upon it. The climate is remarkably mild, even in October and November. No snow has been seen to lie there for these thirty years past, the myrtles grow in the ground against the houses, and Guernsey lilies bloom in every window. . . . In the bosom of the woods, concealed from profane eyes, lie hid the ruins of Netteley Abbey. . . . I should tell you that the ferryman who rowed me, a lusty young fellow, told me that he would not, for all the world, pass a night at the Abbey, there were such things seen near it, though there was a power of money hid there. From thence I went to Salisbury, Wilton, and Stonehenge: but of these things I say no more, they will be published at the University Press.

I have been at London this month, that tiresome, dull place! where all people under thirty find so much amusement.

I had prepared a finer period than the other to finish with, but I have somehow mislaid it among my papers. Adieu! I shall almost be glad to see you again.

T. G.

It is worth noting what places Gray chooses to describe in that letter. He had seen Salisbury Plain and Stone-

henge, famous places both, yet he dismisses them in a sentence, and describes the less known Southampton and Netteley Abbey. It is not the great sights that furnish the best material for letters; these have been described many times, and better than you can describe them. But lesser things, that interest you, will interest your friends as well.

One of the advantages of letter writing is the almost infinite range of subjects that one can touch upon. Even the weather, which is under a ban as a subject for conversation, may become a positively exhilarating topic for a letter. Lowell thus begins a letter to Miss Norton :

MY DEAREST OLD FRIEND: It is a lovely day, cool and bright, and the clerk of the weather has just put a great lump of ice in the pitcher from which he pours his best nectar. Last night, as I walked home from faculty meeting, the northern lights streamed up like great organ pipes, and loveliest hues of pink, green, and blue flitted from one to another in a silent symphony. To-day, consequently, is cold and clear, with a bracing dash of northwest. . . .

If one is blessed with the gift of humor, the letter of all forms of composition affords the best place for its exercise. One is assured of a kindly reception for his jests — a most important point — and if news happens to be scarce, by letting the fancy play one can literally write a letter about nothing.

**Humor in
the letter.**

Charles Lamb wrote to his friend Patmore, and the whole theme of his letter is a whimsical inquiry about Mr. Patmore's dog.

CHASE, ENFIELD.

DEAR P.: Excuse my anxiety, but how is Dash? I should have asked if Mrs. Patmore kept her rules, and was improving; but Dash came uppermost. The order of our thoughts should be the order of our writing. Goes he muzzled, or *aperto ore*? Are his intellects sound, or does he wander a little in his conversation? You cannot be too careful to watch the first symptoms of incoherence. The first illogical snarl he makes, to St. Luke's with him! All the dogs here are going mad, if you believe the overseers; but I protest they seem to me very rational and collected. But nothing is so deceitful as mad people, to those who are not used to them. Try him with hot water: if he won't lick it up it is a sign he does not like it. Does his tail wag horizontally or perpendicularly? That has decided the fate of many dogs in Enfield. Is his general deportment cheerful? I mean when he is pleased—for otherwise there is no judging. You can't be too careful. Has he bit any of the children yet? If he has, have them shot, and keep him for curiosity, to see if it was the hydrophobia. Do you get paunch for him? Take care the sheep was sane. You might pull out his teeth (if he would let you) and then you need not mind if he were as mad as a Bedlamite. . . . If the slightest suspicion arises in your breast that all is not right with him, muzzle him and lead him in a string to Mr. Hood's, his quondam master, and he'll take him in at any time. You may mention your suspicion, or not, as you like, or as you think it may wound or not Mr. H.'s feelings. Hood, I know, will wink at a few

follies in Dash, in consideration of his former sense. Besides, Hood is deaf, and if you hinted anything, ten to one he would not hear you. . . .

I send my love in a — to Dash.

C. LAMB.

After all, perhaps the sagest piece of advice ever given about letter writing is this remark by Edward Rowland Sill: "Do not correspond with more people than you correspond to." It is a manual of letter writing in a sentence. We can all write good letters to the right people; is it worth while trying to write to the others?

If you would see what the letter of friendship is at its best, in its infinite range from humor to pathos, its self-revelation, its charm, and its power to inspire, read the letters of Lowell, of Stevenson, and of Charles Lamb. The truest biography of these men is found in their letters. And this perhaps gives us the key to the essential quality of the letter of friendship: it is, in its best form, a chapter of autobiography.

CHAPTER IX

WRITING IN VERSE

SINCE the time of Horace, it has been a maxim that poets are born, not made. It is perhaps truer to say that poets are born, and then made. Genius is a birth-right, but to make a poet, genius must be supplemented by diligent training. This is so because poetry, far more than prose, depends for its effect upon form. That the thought be poetic is not enough ; it must be shaped into a definite form, a form governed by the laws of meter. By conscious study or by unconscious imitation every poet learns these laws. That is, he learns to make verses. Then, if he has genius, his verses are poetry. It is the purpose of this article to state the laws of verse making.

The unit of poetry is the line. By means of rhyme, lines are bound together into stanzas. The simplest form of stanza is the couplet, illustrated by these lines from Austin Dobson :

Time goes, you say? Ah, no!
Alas, Time stays, *we* go.

Similar to this is the triplet, or stanza of three lines.

Example :

Life is a sheet of paper white
Whereon each one of us may write
His word or two, and then comes night.

— *Lowell.*

The four-line stanza is the one most frequently used in English poetry. It is seen in Emerson's *Wood-notes* :

Thou canst not wave thy staff in air,
Or dip thy paddle in the lake,
But it carves the bow of beauty there,
And the ripples in rhymes the oar forsake.

It is convenient to denote the rhyme-order of a stanza by letters, using the same letter to denote lines that rhyme together. The rhyme-order of the lines just quoted, then, would be *a b a b*; that is, the first and third lines rhyme together, and the second and fourth. A stanza rhyming thus is called a quatrain. But a four-line stanza may rhyme in other ways :

For still in mutual sufferance lies
The secret of true living :
Love scarce is love, that never knows
The sweetness of forgiving.

— *Whittier.*

Here the first and third lines do not rhyme at all. If we call these *x* lines, the rhyme-order will be *x a x a*.

Yet another form of four-line stanza is that used in Tennyson's *In Memoriam* :

I held it truth with him who sings (*a*)
To one clear harp in divers tones, (*b*)
That men may rise on stepping-stones (*b*)
Of their dead selves to higher things. (*a*)

Again, there may be variation in the kind of rhyme. In the stanza quoted above from Whittier the rhymes are dissyllabic, *living*—*giving*; in the stanza from Tennyson they are monosyllabic, *sings*—*things*. A rhyme of one syllable is called single, or masculine, rhyme; of two syllables, double, or feminine, rhyme. Sometimes triple rhyme is found, as in the alternate lines of Hood's *Bridge of Sighs* :

Take her up tenderly,
Lift her with care,
Fashioned so slenderly,
Young, and so fair!

It is not always necessary that the rhyming words should correspond exactly in sound. In Longfellow's *Light of Stars*, for example :

Oh, fear not in a world like this (*a*)
And thou shalt know erelong, (*b*)
Know how sublime a thing it is (*a*)
To suffer and be strong. (*b*)

The *a* rhymes are not exact. This is called imperfect rhyme. It is allowable occasionally, but careful writers do not use it often. It is rather common in Longfellow's early poems, less frequent in his later ones.

The variety of stanza-forms is very great. Almost any volume of poems contains stanzas of five, six, and eight lines, rhyming in various ways. There are, however, two **The Spenserian stanza.** stanza-forms which deserve special mention : the Spenserian stanza and the sonnet. The Spenserian stanza is made up of nine lines, the first eight having ten syllables each, the ninth having twelve syllables. The rhyme-order is *a b a b b c b c c*, as seen in the following stanza from Spenser's *Fairy Queen* :

One day, nigh weary of the irksome way,
 From her unhasty beast she did alight,
 And on the grass her dainty limbs did lay
 In secret shadow, far from all men's sight.
 From her fair head her fillet she undight,
 And laid her stole aside. Her angel's face
 As the great eye of heaven, shined bright,
 And made a sunshine in the shady place ;
 Did never mortal eye behold such heavenly grace.

The sonnet is a poem of fourteen lines. It is made up of two parts : the first eight lines, called the octave, and the last six, the sestet. It may rhyme in various ways. **The sonnet.** The Shakespearian sonnet has the following rhyme-order : *abab cdcd efef gg*. The

Italian form of sonnet rhymes *abba abba abc abc*. The sestet may also rhyme in other ways.

But rhyme is not the only nor the chief characteristic of poetry. *Paradise Lost* is poetry, yet it does not rhyme at all. The distinguishing feature of poetry is rhythm, or meter. In every line of poetry the words are so arranged that there is a ^{Meter.} regular recurrence of accented syllables. If you read aloud the first line of Longfellow's *Excelsior*,

The shades of night were falling fast,

you will notice that you accent the words "shades," "night," "falling" (first syllable), and "fast." If we mark the accented syllables thus, —, and unaccented ones thus, ∪, the line would be scanned in this way:

∪ — ∪ — ∪ — ∪ —
The shades of night were falling fast.

The line contains four accents, and these fall regularly on alternate syllables. If the remaining lines of the stanza be read aloud, it will be seen that in each one there is the same arrangement — four accented syllables, alternating with four unaccented ones. To realize the importance of regularity of accent, transpose the word "falling" to the end of the line, and read it:

∪ — ∪ — ∪ — — ∪
The shades of night were fast falling.

It does not sound right: why not? If you mark the accents, you will see that at the end two accented syllables come together, instead of alternating. Or try to modify the line in another way, by adding a syllable:

$\overset{\cup}{\text{The}} \overset{\cup}{\text{shades}} \overset{\cup}{\text{of}} \overset{\cup}{\text{night}} \overset{\cup}{\text{were}} \overset{\cup}{\text{now}} \overset{\cup}{\text{falling}} \overset{\cup}{\text{fast}}.$

Again the line halts, for now it has five accented syllables instead of four. It is evident, then, that poetry demands a fixed number of accents in a line, and that these accents shall be arranged in a definite order. To change this is like striking a false note in music. This order is different in different poems, but in any one poem it is established, and, with slight variations, all the lines conform to it.

Further, this line may be divided into feet, or groups of syllables, each group containing an unaccented and an accented syllable, thus:

$\overset{\cup}{\text{The}} \text{ — } \overset{\cup}{\text{shades}} \text{ — } \overset{\cup}{\text{of}} \text{ — } \overset{\cup}{\text{night}} \text{ — } \overset{\cup}{\text{were}} \text{ — } \overset{\cup}{\text{now}} \text{ — } \overset{\cup}{\text{falling}} \text{ — } \overset{\cup}{\text{fast}}.$

A foot like this, $\cup \text{ —}$, made up of two syllables with the accent on the second, is called an iambus, or iambic foot. A line of four feet is called a tetrameter line, so that this poem would be described metrically as written in iambic tetrameter.

Take another example, Longfellow's *Psalm of Life*. If the line below be read aloud, the accents are seen to be as follows:

— ∪ | — ∪ | — ∪ | — ∪
Art is long, and time is fleeting.

Dividing this into feet, we have a foot just the reverse of the iambic ; thus, — ∪. This foot, of two syllables, with the accent on the first, is called a trochee, or trochaic foot. Now scan the second line of this stanza :

— ∪ | — ∪ | — ∪ | —
And our hearts, though strong and brave.

Something is wrong here — only one syllable in the last foot. Take the next two lines :

— ∪ | — ∪ | — ∪ | — ∪
Still, like muffled drums are beating
— ∪ | — ∪ | — ∪ | —
Funeral marches to the grave.

The third line of the stanza is like the first, the fourth like the second. So the principle of regularity is still observed, only now there are two types of line : the first and third in each stanza follow one type, the second and fourth follow another. If the other stanzas in the poem are analyzed it will be seen that they are all constructed on the same plan.

Yet another kind of foot is found in Browning's *The Lost Leader* :

— ∪ ∪ | — ∪ ∪ | — ∪ ∪ | — ∪
Just for a handful of silver he left us.

Here the prevailing foot has three syllables, with the stress on the first : this is called a dactyl, and throughout the poem dactylic feet are used, except the last foot

in each line, which may be a trochee, as above, or be monosyllabic.

The first thing to note, then, is that a poet always adopts a certain definite arrangement of accented and unaccented syllables. This is the meter, the tune to which he sets the words. The choice of meter is governed largely by the nature of the poem. A reflective poem, like Gray's *Elegy* asks a slow movement, so we have a long line, of ten syllables, and a foot, the iambic, that moves slowly. But when a poet wishes to describe rapid action, as in Scott's *Lochinvar*, he chooses a different measure :

$\cup \quad \text{—} \quad | \quad \cup \quad \cup \text{—} \quad | \quad \cup \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad | \quad \cup \quad \cup \quad \text{—}$
 O young Lochinvar is come out of the west,
 $\cup \quad \text{—} \quad | \quad \cup \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad | \quad \cup \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad | \quad \cup \quad \cup \quad \text{—}$
 In all the wide border his steed is the best.

That moves much faster : why? Because of the many unaccented syllables. The prevailing foot is the anapest, made up of three syllables, with the accent on the third ; thus, $\cup \quad \cup \quad \text{—}$. These unaccented syllables are read much faster than accented ones, so the line moves lightly and rapidly. But if grief is to be expressed the movement must be slow, which means a large proportion of accented syllables. This is seen in Tennyson's lines :

$\text{—} \quad \text{—} \quad | \quad \text{—} \quad \text{—} \quad | \quad \text{—}$
 Break ! break ! break !
 $\cup \quad \cup \quad \text{—} \quad | \quad \text{—} \quad \text{—} \quad | \quad \cup \quad \text{—}$
 On thy cold gray stones, O sea !

So far we have assumed that the poet, having selected a metrical form, follows it throughout the poem. This is true, but it must not be interpreted too rigidly. In Gray's *Elegy*, for example, the opening lines would be scanned as follows :

∪ — | ∪ — | ∪ — | ∪ — | ∪ —
 The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
 ∪ — | ∪ — | — — | ∪ — | ∪ —
 The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea.

The meter is iambic, and all the feet in the first line are regular. But in the second line the third foot has two accented syllables. This is called a spondee. The effect of this is to retard the movement of the line, and thus the very rhythm of the verse suggests the thought. Again, another line in the same poem is scanned as follows :

∪ — | ∪ — | ∪ — | ∪ ∪ | ∪ —
 Implores the passing tribute of a sigh.

The fourth foot is made up of two unaccented syllables. This is called a pyrrhic foot. Spondaic and pyrrhic feet are found in nearly every stanza of the poem. They are not mistakes, but are often used intentionally, to prevent the meter from becoming monotonous. Slight changes like these do not interrupt the flow of the rhythm : there are enough regular feet to carry the tune along.

As for the language of verse, it may be whatever the

poet wills. At one time it was almost an article of faith that poetry demanded a certain style ; that some words were suitable for use in verse and others were unsuitable, being too common, or too plain. This theory of poetic diction received its death-blow from Wordsworth, and since his day the vocabulary of poetry has been substantially as wide as that of prose. Our dialect poets, Lowell in the *Biglow Papers* and Riley in his Hoosier rhymes, have shown us that the homeliest words may be made to dance to the poet's tunes. And with respect to the choice of subject the same freedom prevails : you can write a poem on any subject if you can see poetry in it. A steam threshing machine is about as unpromising material for poetry as one could find, and yet in Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*, second series, there is a beautiful sonnet, by a brother of Alfred Tennyson, on a steam thresher. After that, one may attempt anything.

EXERCISES

1. Unless one has had some practice in writing verse, it is best to begin by studying the forms of verse as seen in others' writings. Turn to Longfellow's Poems, the little group at the beginning called "Ballads and Other Poems." What is the rhyme-order of the poem *To the River*

Charles? Are the rhymes masculine or feminine? In *The Goblet of Life* note how rhyme is used to link one stanza to the next. In *Excelsior* observe the use of the refrain, *i.e.* the repetition of a word or words at the end of each stanza. What is the rhyme-order of *The Village Blacksmith*? Note that it changes in the second stanza. Find examples of imperfect rhyme in the fifth and sixth stanzas. Find other examples in *The Skeleton in Armor*.

2. What is the meter of Longfellow's *Endymion*? The easiest way to determine this is to read a line aloud, reading it naturally, and note where the accents fall. Mark these syllables thus, —, and the others thus, ∪, then divide the line into feet. Scan the third stanza, and note the irregular meter of the third line, also in the last line of the poem. Scan *The Rainy Day*. Note that there is an extra syllable at the end of each line. This is not regarded as a foot; such a line is called hypermetrical. Observe the use of the refrain in this poem. What is the meter of *Maidenhood*? To determine this, scan the third stanza.

3. Scan the first stanza of *The Wreck of the Hesperus*. Observe the mingling of anapests in the third line. Scan the second stanza, and note the opening trochee. This poem is written in the style of the old ballads, which admitted a free mingling of poetic feet.

Scan the first five lines of *Hiawatha*. What is the meter? Scan the first six lines of *Evangeline*. What is the meter? Note the frequent substitution of trochaic feet. In the fourth line all but one are trochees. In the fifth line there is a spondee — “deep-voiced.”

4. Try a parody on *Hiawatha*. The meter is very easy to manage, and there are no rhymes to puzzle over. Read several pages of the poem aloud, to get the tune in your mind, then go on and write something in the same meter.

5. Write a ballad in the meter of *The Wreck of the Hesperus*. Take as your subject some story that you have heard or read, and after reading aloud Longfellow's ballad, set your story to the same tune.

6. The Spenserian stanza is not a difficult form, if one has had some practice in verse writing. It lends itself readily to descriptive writing. A description of a scene may easily be written in the compass of a stanza. Admirable examples may be found in Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*, or in Byron's *Childe Harold*.

CHAPTER X

CAPITALIZATION AND PUNCTUATION

IN early writing capital letters were not used at all. To-day their use varies in different countries. The sentence

Berlin is a German city,

if written in German, would have the word "city" capitalized; if written in French, neither "German" nor "city" would begin with capital letters. Capitalization, therefore, does not depend upon absolute rules, but upon the custom of the country. And this custom is subject to change. Joseph Addison, writing his *Spectator* in 1711, used capitals as follows:

It being a very cold Day when he made his Will, he left for Mourning to every Man in the Parish a great Frieze Coat, and to every Woman a black Riding-hood.

The only guide to the use of capitals, then, is the custom of good writers at the present day. The following rules are generally accepted:

Capitalize the first word of a sentence, the first word of a line of poetry, the first word of a direct quotation.

Capitalize proper nouns and proper adjectives.

Capitalize personal pronouns referring to the Deity.

Capitalize the pronoun "I" and the interjection "O."

Capitalize titles when they precede the name, as Captain John Smith.

Punctuation. The purpose of punctuation is to make clear the meaning of a sentence. How necessary it is may be seen from the following sentence :

I had no relatives ,without purpose I drifted here and there was no one to advise me ,what to do I knew not.

Properly punctuated, it is perfectly clear :

I had no relatives ; without purpose I drifted here, and there was no one to advise me ; what to do I knew not.

The rules for punctuation, like those for the use of capitals, are derived entirely from usage. If we were accustomed to using a comma at the end of a sentence, the comma would mean a full stop. Or it might be used to mark a direct question, or an exclamation. But as a matter of fact all writers agree in using the comma for certain definite purposes, and it is our place to follow their example. Let us begin with a simple sentence :

Brown bought a horse.

That requires only a period at the end.

Brown, an old friend of mine, bought a horse.

Commas are used to set off words or phrases used in apposition. **The comma.**

Brown bought a horse, gray, with black feet.

Comma to mark a modifier out of its natural order.

Brown bought a young, spirited, handsome horse.

Commas used to separate words in a series of three or more.

Brown bought a spirited young horse.

Jones bought a spavined, broken-down horse.

Commas are used in the second sentence because the modifiers are of equal importance ; in the first sentence the emphasis is upon spirited more than upon young.

Brown bought a horse, but he does not intend to keep him.

Comma to separate parts of a compound sentence.

Fred, come down and see Brown's horse.

Comma to set off word used in direct address.

"I have not time," he replied.

Comma to set off a short, direct quotation.

Brown bought a horse which, if I am any judge, is skittish.

Commas to set off a parenthetical expression.

Brown's horse, which you saw, is not safe.

Comma to set off a relative clause which is explanatory. When the relative clause is restrictive, *i.e.* limits the meaning of the noun to a definite object, it is not set off by commas, as in the following sentence :

The horse which you speak of is not safe.

The distinction between the explanatory and the restrictive clause may be felt by reading the sentence aloud ; one naturally pauses in the first sentence above.

Brown bought a horse ; his wife, an automobile.

Comma used to denote omission of words.

Well, Brown had no business to buy such a horse.

Comma to set off an introductory expression.

There is a chance that he may be able to sell it, however.

However, nevertheless, moreover, and similar expressions, which modify the sentence as a whole rather than any particular word, are usually set off by commas.

The semi-colon. The semicolon marks a stronger pause than the comma, and so is used to separate clauses in a sentence not closely connected :

Brown's wife refused to ride behind the horse ; none of his friends would venture out with him ; Brown himself felt safer when his daily drive was over.

The semicolon is also used to mark the important divisions in a sentence that is subdivided by commas :

Brown's horse, which he thought such a bargain, was sold at auction; he now rides in his wife's automobile.

The colon is used to introduce formally a direct quotation : The colon.

The orator began as follows: "Mr. President, I have no desire to enter into an encomium upon Massachusetts."

The colon is used to introduce an enumeration :

The following officers were elected: President, Willis Bond; Secretary, James MacAlpin; Treasurer, Ralph West.

The colon is also used to mark the principal divisions of a long sentence that is subdivided by commas and semicolons.

The principles of sentence-division may be graphically indicated thus :

Two short clauses are usually separated by a comma.

— , —

Long clauses, subdivided by commas, are separated by a semicolon.

— , — ; — , —

Long clauses, subdivided by semicolons, are separated by the colon.

— ; — : — ; —



Quotation marks.

Quotation marks are used to enclose a direct quotation :

“Where are my books ? ” he asked.

Note that the interrogation point is placed within the quotation marks, because it belongs to the quoted passage.

In the sentence,

Who said, “ Let there be light ” ?

the quotation is not a question, so the interrogation point stands after the quotation marks, indicating that it belongs to the whole sentence.

A quotation within a quotation is enclosed in single quotation marks :

John said, “ I remember his very words, they were : ‘ I shall see it through. ’ ”

If several consecutive paragraphs are quoted, marks of quotation are placed at the beginning of each paragraph, and at the end of the last only.

Titles of books, poems, magazine articles, may be placed in quotation marks or italicized.

The dash. The dash is used to indicate a sudden change of thought :

I shall now discuss — but no, there is no more time.

The dash is sometimes used to enclose a parenthetical expression :

When the jury was dismissed — and this was the day following the trial — they were set upon by the mob.

The dash is used after an enumeration, to precede a summarizing word :

Negroes, Chinese, Indians, Mexicans, half-breeds, — such make up the population of the territory.

The apostrophe is used to mark omitted letters : **The apostrophe.**

Don't do that ; it isn't right.

The apostrophe is used with *s* to indicate the possessive case :

Charles's hat was lost.

The apostrophe is used with *s* to form the plural of letters and signs :

There are three a's in the word.

The hyphen is used where a word is divided at the end of a line. **The hyphen.**

The hyphen is used in some compound words, as to-day, twenty-four. No general rule can be given for the use of the hyphen in compound words ; the dictionary is the only guide.

Parentheses and brackets. Marks of parenthesis are used to enclose matter that has no grammatical dependence on the rest of the sentence :

Darwin says (*Origin of Species*, p. 326) that the earth-worm is very useful to farmers.

Brackets are used in making an addition or correction in quoted matter :

Lowell writes: "In the early days of this college [Harvard] no attention was given to the modern languages."

EXERCISES

1. The commonest errors in punctuation are those of omission. To learn to punctuate properly it is a good plan to read aloud a few pages of what you have written, notice where you pause, and punctuate accordingly.

2. An excellent exercise is to have a passage from a book read aloud to you ; copy it, punctuate it, then compare your punctuation with the original.

3. Punctuate these sentences, and give a reason for each mark used :

Hard workers hard talkers hard fighters such were Carlyles ancestors.

The world this world we call ours has no room for dissolute idle fellows.

In any event keep your head cool my friend.

Roses always have thorns and thorns too have roses.

Washington served his country by generalship Franklin by statecraft.

Cowardice asks Is it safe

I determined to go on for three reasons first because it was growing dark second because I felt sure we were near a town and third because I knew our friends would be alarmed about us.

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